



Country of Birth Standard

The country of birth standard identifies the country in which a person was born or the country in which a person's father and/or mother was born

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Introduction

Background

The Country of Birth standard codifies the concept, definitions, and methods recommended by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for collecting, processing and presenting country of birth statistics. The use of this standard will enable the compilation of statistics about the countries of birth of people living in Australia and their parents.

Country of Birth may be used with a range of other variables to measure the cultural and ethnic composition of the Australian population. The variables provide a means for standardising the way Country of Birth data are collected and disseminated.

Name of standard

This is the Country of Birth standard. It includes the variables:

- Country of Birth of Person
- Country of Birth of Father, and
- Country of Birth of Mother.

Definitions

Nominal definition

Nominally, Country of Birth is defined as the country in which a person was born.

Operational definitions

Operationally, Country of Birth has been defined for each of the three variables:

- Country of Birth of Person, which is the country identified as being the one in which the person was born
- Country of Birth of Father, which is the country in which the person's birth father was born, and
- Country of Birth of Mother, which is the country in which the person's birth mother was born.

Discussion of issues

These variables can be used to provide information about whether a person, or their father or mother, was born in Australia or overseas. More detailed information on Country of Birth may be available where detailed question modules are used.

The country of birth for father or mother is intended to be limited to birth parents. People who are adopted, or have step or foster parents or other guardians, should provide the country of birth for their birth parents, if known. If the country of birth for birth parents is unknown, no response should be provided.

Collection of variable data

Scope

Statistical units

Country of Birth is an attribute of the statistical unit 'person'. The Country of Birth variables apply to all persons.

Question modules

There are three standard question modules for collecting Country of Birth:

- detailed question module
- short question module, and
- minimum question module.

The detailed and short question modules enable responses to be provided by the selection of an appropriate option or by completing the 'Other – please specify' category. These modules support the collection of detailed data about country of birth.

The choice of module may be informed by the following factors:

- information needs
- cost of processing the data
- space available in the collection instrument, and
- respondent burden.

Each alternative to the question module may be accompanied by a brief explanatory note about why Country of Birth variables are collected, including instructions about how to answer the question. The explanatory note can be included with the chosen question module or in supplementary documentation. The recommended text for the explanatory note is in Appendix A.

Detailed question module

The detailed question module for the variable Country of Birth of Person is:

Q. In which country [were you] [was the person] [was (name)] born?

	Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	England	<input type="checkbox"/>
	New Zealand	<input type="checkbox"/>
	India	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Phillippines	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Italy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	South Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Malaysia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other - please specify.....	

The detailed question module for the variable Country of Birth of Father is:

Q. In which country was [your] [the person's] [(name)'s] father born?

	Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	England	<input type="checkbox"/>
	New Zealand	<input type="checkbox"/>
	India	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Phillippines	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Italy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	South Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Malaysia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify.....		

The detailed question module for the variable Country of Birth of Mother is:

Q. In which country was [your] [the person's] [(name)'s] mother born?

	Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	England	<input type="checkbox"/>
	New Zealand	<input type="checkbox"/>
	India	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Phillippines	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Italy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	South Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Malaysia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify.....		

The response options listed for these question modules are sourced from 4-digit categories in the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC). According to data from the Census of Population and Housing, they have a high statistical frequency in Australia.

Although China is a country in which a large proportion of Australia's population were born, it is excluded from the list because the SACC includes a more detailed country breakdown consisting of:

- China (excluding Special Administrative Regions (SARs) and Taiwan)
- Hong Kong
- Macau, and
- Taiwan.

Therefore, if China was included in the option list the detail of responses is likely to decrease. For example, people born in Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan may select the 'China' response option from the list instead of specifying they were born in Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan. It should be noted that the SACC is used more broadly than Country of Birth statistics, such as for trade and investment statistics.

Short question module

The short question module for the variable Country of Birth of Person is:

Q. In which country [were you] [was the person] [was (name)] born?

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify.....	

The short question module for the variable Country of Birth of Father is:

Q. In which country was [your] [the person's] [(name)'s] father born?

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify.....	

The short question module for the variable Country of Birth of Mother is:

Q. In which country was [your] [the person's] [(name)'s] mother born?

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify.....	

Minimum question module

The minimum question module for the variable Country of Birth of Person is:

Q. In which country [were you] [was the person] [was (name)] born?

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other country	<input type="checkbox"/>

The minimum question module for the variable Country of Birth of Father is:

Q. In which country was [your] [the person's] [(name)'s] father born?

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other country	<input type="checkbox"/>

The minimum question module for the variable Country of Birth of Mother is:

Q. In which country was [your] [the person's] [(name)'s] mother born?

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other country	<input type="checkbox"/>

Processing the data

Coding

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Country of Birth variables are coded using the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), 2016 ([ABS catalogue number 1269.0 \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1269.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1269.0)).

Detailed information about the criteria used to develop the structure of SACC is available in the '[Building the Classification \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/1269.0Main%20Features52016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1269.0&issue=2016&num=&view=\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/1269.0Main%20Features52016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1269.0&issue=2016&num=&view=)' page of SACC.

Output categories for detailed data

Where practicable, it is recommended that data be captured, classified and stored at the most detailed level of the classification. This:

- allows greater flexibility for the output of data
- enables more detailed and complex analysis, and
- facilitates comparisons with historical data and data from other sources.

Input categories for detailed data

The standard categories for collecting Country of Birth using the detailed and short question modules are the 4-digit categories in SACC.

Input categories for minimum data

The standard categories for collecting Country of Birth using the minimum question modules are:

- Australia, and
- Other country.

Coding index

Coding indexes are tools that support categorisation of information against a statistical classification and contain terms that are not officially recognised (e.g. synonyms and misspelt terms). A coding index may be of use to anyone seeking to code responses to a statistical classification and may be requested by contacting standards@abs.gov.au (<mailto:standards@abs.gov.au>).

All responses to questions about Country of Birth that are coded to SACC use the coding rules detailed on the '[Coding Index \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/1269.0Main%20Features152016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1269.0&issue=2016&num=&view=\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/1269.0Main%20Features152016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1269.0&issue=2016&num=&view=)' page of the publication. Responses are matched with entries in a SACC coding index to determine the correct classification code.

Presenting the data

Output categories

The hierarchical structure of the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), 2016 ([ABS catalogue number 1269.0 \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1269.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1269.0)) allows users the flexibility to produce statistics at the level of the classification which best suits information needs.

Requirements for data quality or respondent confidentiality may preclude output of data at the more detailed level of the classification. Under these circumstances, data can be aggregated and disseminated at the higher levels of SACC.

Output categories for minimum data

The standard output categories for the minimum question modules are:

- Born in Australia, and
- Born overseas.

Appendix - explanatory script

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Abbreviations

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History of changes

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Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 1200.0.55.004.

